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Introduction: cultural horizons and practices in Himalayan space

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Introduction:

cultural horizons and practices in Himalayan space

The Himalayas are renowned for their unique, high-mountain landscape, full of extreme contrasts, as well for an immense and fascinating cultural variety. The present volume addresses the question of how notions of space and landscape find expression in Himalayan cultural traditions, languages, and practices. What kind of spatial concepts and orders can be distinguished, and what, if any, is the interrelationship between physical space and the representations of this space? The contributions deal with these questions by focusing on various ethnic groups of Tibeto-Burman descentance, in particular on Belhare (Athpare), Magar, Mewahang and other Rai, Newar, Tamang and Tamu ('Gurung') societies living in the central Himalayas (see the map on page 28/29).

In anthropological and cultural studies of the Himalayas the issue of spatial categories is a recurrent theme. Research on everyday practices (domestic space, urban space, etc.) and religious traditions (shamanism, temple cults, pilgrimages, etc.) has brought out various concepts of spatial orientation. For example, various studies have pointed out the cultural symbolism attached to the horizontal dimension, as in conceptions of a circle marking out a sacred space (e. g., the *Nepāl maṇḍala*), and have highlighted the significance of the vertical dimension, as in ideas of a layered cosmos. In trying to reconstruct the indigenous notions, the conceptual system which makes up the spatial order, scholars have increasingly looked both at ritual practices and at cultural patterns manifested in language. It is the interrelationship between categories and action, between text and performance, which has become a major issue of analysis.

Generally there has been a certain convergence in the last decades between the social and the cognitive sciences, especially between anthropology and linguistics, which has also been noticeable in Himalayan research. As anthropologists have opened up more and more toward language studies and have come to include formerly neglected sources such as written texts or oral traditions, conversely philologists and linguists have come to profit from relating language testimonies to their

wider social context. An example of fruitful collaboration and rapprochement has been the work of anthropologists-tibetologists on sacred mountains (Blondeau and Steinkellner 1996, Macdonald 1997). Similarly, in linguistic studies there has been a growing interest in the cultural dimensions of Himalayan languages. Particularly the ubiquitous grammaticalization, down to the level of regular case marking, of notions for 'up', 'down' and 'across' in Kiranti languages has raised questions of theoretical import concerning the interrelationship between grammar, pragmatics and cultural symbolism. And obviously such complex linguistic phenomena as ritual languages cannot be studied without recourse to such matters as priestly competence and speech performance. The present volume goes beyond the narrow boundaries of scholarly disciplines and looks at Himalayan concepts of space as reflected in cultural categories and symbols, linguistic features, and social practices.

In many respects, the anthropology of Himalayan space has been pioneered by Allen's (1972) seminal study of the notion of 'up' in Thulung Rai symbolic classification and language, and in this introductory chapter we first review the legacy associated with this early work (section 1). In section 2, we attempt to draw some comparative conclusions about the ways in which the societies studied in this volume organize space from the point of view of recent work in cognitive science. Finally, section 3 provides an overview of the structure of the book and summarizes the individual contributions.

1. The anthropological legacy: symbolic classification and ritual practice

The anthropological study of spatial orientation has been primarily concerned with the interrelationship between space and the social order. It has dealt with the symbolic and cultural values attached to spatial divisions and the formal manner in which actors make use of these divisions as members of social groups. In other words, anthropological approaches focussed mainly on indigenous systems of classification and the ways these are expressed or enacted in ritual. Both of these concerns have their roots in the Durkheim school and its notion of collective representations.

1.1 Symbolic classification

The study of social classification was inspired by such seminal works as that on 'primitive classification' (Durkheim and Mauss 1970) or on the distinction between right and left (Hertz 1909). Here notions of space came to be seen as intrinsically linked with other divisions: social, natural, cosmological, etc. For example, the Zuni Indians of North America distinguish between six directions: north, south, east, west, zenith, nadir; each of them is associated with different social groupings, with different natural species, with different colours, etc. (Durkheim and Mauss 1970: 42-55). To be sure, there are serious problems with the central argument of these two authors (cf. Needham 1970). But at any rate, the phenomenon of such homological divisions has been observed in cultures all around the world. As no intrinsic relationship exists between the various domains which are linked in this manner, these systems have been termed 'symbolic classification' (Needham 1973).

Also in Himalayan ethnography such systems of a symbolic classification of space have been reported in many forms. For example, several studies of indigenous architecture and domestic space have pointed out the different valuations of various sections of a building and their association with other cosmological domains (in this volume, see in particular Oppitz' and Bickel's contributions). A 'classic' case is Sagant's (1973) description of Limbu domestic categories in Eastern Nepal. The ethnographer's analysis shows that Limbu conceptions of the internal structure of the house are governed by a series of opposing — and unequally valued — categories: north vs. south, east vs. west, upstream vs. downstream, up vs. down, right vs. left. Through these interrelated categories domestic space acquires multiple layers of meaning which come out particularly in ritual but which can also be made use of in ordinary interaction (see section 1.2 below).

Another well-known case is the spatial organisation of the royal Newar cities of the Kathmandu valley. Here urban space is marked by the location of shrines which are arranged in concentric circles of different orders, forming a *maṇḍala* pattern (Toffin, this volume; Gutschow 1982, Slusser 1982). In the typical Newar city eight mother goddesses (*aṣṭamātṛkā*), manifestations of Durgā, watch over the directional points, being located both in temples inside the city boundaries, as well as in shrines 'outside' (Toffin, this volume). Similar circular arrangements of other divinities, e. g. eight (or four) Bhairavas or eight (or four) Gaṇeśas, appear on various scales, all pointing to the sacred centre, where the major deity — and the royal palace — is situated.

Such 'projected' *maṇḍalas* may be found in various scales throughout South Asia and neighbouring areas. For example, as a recent volume dealing with the Tibetan region shows, a particular landscape becomes charged with the religious meaning of an ideal mental order, irrespective of the contingencies of the actual topographic conditions (Macdonald 1997). The combination of circles, squares and triangles in a *maṇḍala* is of course especially apt to represent such a psycho-cosmic order. But there are also other mental images which have been projected onto the landscape (Gutschow 1982: 110, 180ff.): e. g., the sword (in the case of Kathmandu), the conch shell (in the case of Puri), the *damaru* drum (in the case of Bhaktapur), the spiral (Kathmandu Valley). Images like these draw a conceptual boundary, thus defining an 'inside' as well as an 'outside' (cf. Toffin, this volume).

All these projections concern mainly the horizontal plane: they may be seen as cognitive maps which can be easily represented in the manner of two-dimensional schemes. However, as is already evident from the Zuni example cited by Durkheim and Mauss, the vertical dimension may also be subject to cultural valuation and acquire wider symbolic significance. This aspect has been brought out in particular by N. J. Allen in his pioneering study of the vertical dimension in Thulung classification (Allen 1972). As Allen shows, the distinction between 'up' and 'down', usually in relation to ego, is a pervasive categorical opposition in the classificatory system of this Rai community from Eastern Nepal, which serves to express a whole range of dichotomies, such as social values (e. g. high status/low status), economic success (e. g. good/bad harvest), psychological states (e. g. confidence/depression), etc. A similar system is reported by Stellrecht (1992) for the Burushaski speakers in the Karakorum. In both cases, the 'up-down' opposition appears to have similar importance for the system of symbolic classification as the lateral opposition between right and left has in many other cultures (Needham 1973). What is unique about the Thulung case — and related cases are discussed in some of the contributions to this volume — is that the 'up-down' dimension is not only predominant in cultural symbolism but also deeply inscribed in the language, even on the level of grammar (see Bickel's, Ebert's and Gaenszle's contributions).

Whether such cultural spaces have been described in terms of collective representations, symbolic classifications, metaphor, or simply indigenous notions, most anthropologists have stressed the comprehensive nature of these conceptual orders. Space is not an 'empty', neutral and abstract *a priori* but appears here as a '*fait social total*': it is a reference system not only of spatial orientation in the physical sense but also of social, cosmological and thus existential orientation. A recurrent feature of these systems of orientation is the homology of spaces: "nested with-

in each other in the manner of Russian boxes" (Toffin, this volume, p. 66), spaces of different scales replicate the same structure on different levels. Thus one often finds homologies such as: cosmological space :: geographical space :: local space :: domestic space :: bodily space (see especially the contributions by Toffin, Oppitz and Gaenszle). Of course this is a description in analytic terms. In the indigenous perspective these spaces are not separate but form a complex whole which is dense with multiple meanings.

1.2 Ritual practice

The focus on systems of classification in the anthropological study of space has been particularly fruitful. However, (and this is another insight which derives from the work of Durkheim and Mauss), the fundamental concepts and representations of a society find expression above all in ritual enactments. Therefore the study of spatial categories is incomplete without the study of ritual movements and symbolic action in space. Ritual practice always presupposes a complex and idealized spatial order (e. g. sacred geography, temples, altar construction, etc.), but it is only through performative action within this space that the rite becomes effective. Parkin (1992) has suggested defining ritual in general in terms of 'formulaic spatiality', as all ritual is concerned with movement, directionality and spatial orientation, making frequent use of metaphors of passage and journeying.

The importance of ritual enactment becomes clear in our examples from above. In his study of the Limbu house, Sagant shows how the system of spatial categories is used in social practice, for example in the context of funerary rituals, in ancestral cults, or in the formalized acts of hospitality (Sagant 1973). Similarly, accounts of Newar urban space places particular emphasis on the fact that the structure of sacred space is periodically marked out through ritual circumambulations and processions (Toffin, this volume; Gutschow 1982). In other contexts, it is through the practice of pilgrimage, an often lengthy and hazardous religious journey through the landscape, that the sacred geography is put into action (cf. Macdonald 1997).

Among the Tibeto-Burman speaking groups of the Himalayas one often finds a particular kind of journey which requires no physical movement in wider space: this is the ritual journey of the shaman or tribal priest, which is discussed in several of the present contributions (Oppitz, Gaenszle, Höfer, Pettigrew). In this verbal journey the practitioner travels through the geographical landscape by enouncing the place names as he goes along. Here the underlying system of classification is

less obvious, as there are only few man-made visual symbols (like temples, etc.) which function as landmarks or nodal points. The imaginary journey proceeds along rivers, through villages, over mountain passes. So the central question is: What is the 'logic' behind these journeys? Why is it that a particular route is taken in a particular ritual context? Some earlier studies have tried to explain the phenomenon of ritual journeys in general terms, with quite different solutions (e. g. Allen 1974 in terms of structural transformations, Desjarlais 1989 in psychological terms). But until recently little detailed information on this wide-spread cultural practice was available. The four papers in this volume approach the issue by carefully looking at specific cases of such journeys and by trying to understand the significance of the various itineraries within the indigenous conceptual order.

In all these examples, the landscape is permeated by meaning, it is linked with images of divine, heroic and/or ancestral figures of a mythic past who have established a lasting relationship with the land in an act of appropriation. By commemorating this in ritual practice and in the narration of myths, a more encompassing, transcendental vision is invoked, in which the ordinary experience of the physical surroundings becomes embedded in a larger framework. In his introduction to a volume called 'the anthropology of landscape', Eric Hirsch has stressed that landscape should not be seen as something static (as in many 'realistic' representations) but rather as a process "which relates a 'foreground' everyday social life ('us the way we are') to a 'background' potential social existence ('us the way we might be')" (Hirsch 1995: 22). In other words, there is a dynamic relationship between the familiar, immediate (here and now), quotidian 'place', and the wider horizon of a more symbolic 'space'. Thus landscape as a process "attains a form of timelessness and fixity in certain idealized and transcendent situations, such as painted landscape representation, but which can be achieved only momentarily, if ever, in the human world of social relationships" (*ibid.*).

At this point it becomes clear that the ritual enactment of spatial categories is only one side of the coin. In ritual the underlying conceptual order emerges in a particularly succinct manner, but this does not mean that the more mundane forms of spatial orientation are independent of cultural conditions. While in recent times anthropological studies of space have increasingly turned toward everyday forms of cognition and the pragmatics of spatial reference, they have emphasized that this is all intimately linked to fundamental cultural orders (see, e. g., Hanks 1990). The analysis of ordinary language usage brings about a remarkable variety of ways in which space can be implicitly construed for the purpose of locating things. By following this approach anthropologists open up to cognitive science and linguists

relate the micro-analysis of language forms and everyday cognition to the larger socio-cultural context.

2. The view from cognitive science: the typology of space

Cognitive science and most philosophical strands from Kant to Merleau-Ponty have long assumed that spatial conceptualization and language are universally founded and centered on the human body's left/right and front/back coordinates. These body-based and 'ego-centric' views have been challenged by recent work of Levinson (e. g., 1997, Levinson and Brown 1994, or Pederson et al. 1998) and colleagues: many societies prefer systems of cardinal directions or notions of uphill and downhill, landward and seaward, etc., as frameworks of orientation even for small-scale location: 'my uphill leg' or 'the glass to the north' are regular expressions in various languages all around the globe, and this is also true of most Tibeto-Burman languages of the Himalayas. In some Kiranti languages emphasis on this kind of spatial reference is even directly reflected in grammar: these languages include among their grammatical categories, i. e., on a par with such fundamental categories as person, tense or mood, markers for 'up(hill)', 'down(hill)' and 'across/traverse' inclinations (Allen 1972, Rai 1988, Ebert 1994 and this volume, Bickel 1997 and this volume). Often, this category even encompasses case marking — a phenomenon (so far) unheard of from any other corner of the world.

Orientation systems like these, which have been variously analyzed as 'topomnemonic' (Bühler 1934), 'absolute' (Miller and Johnson-Laird 1976) or 'geomorphic' (Bickel 1994) orientation, appear to have much impact on the way people think in everyday spatial cognition (see Levinson 1997). In order to know which glass is north or uphill on a table inside a room, you have to know the local geography even indoors or in the dark. This requires that you always 'keep in mind' facts about the terrain, that you regiment to a certain degree your thinking to the landscape you live in. With systems based on the human body or the speaker's position this is different: the only prerequisite for using phrases like 'to the right' or 'there in front', viz. awareness of the speaker's (and the addressee's) current position and the orientation of his or her body, is given by the natural presuppositions of human physiology.

Thus, what has been thought of as a psychological given is an important cultural variable. As such, systems of geomorphic orientation need to be studied against the cultural background of the people using them.

2.1 The cultural foundation of landscape-based or 'geomorphic' space

In order to continuously know cardinal directions and hill inclinations, you do not need an abstract compass or altimeter in your head, but rather an intimate and practical awareness of the local terrain and topography. This has been forcefully demonstrated by Haugen's (1957) seminal study of Icelandic orientation: expressions like 'to the south' are not always used in line with the south of the compass. Rather, it is often based on the ultimate goal of a journey, the current compass direction being irrelevant: if you head from Switzerland to Italy, you travel south throughout and do not care much about the train's current westward orientation on some parts of the journey. Allen (1972: 83) gives a Thulung Rai example: "Tingla lies two hours to the west of Mukli, and only marginally to its south, yet it is obligatory in Mukli to speak of coming 'up' from it. This might be because it lay close to the route ultimately leading southwards to Bahing territory (along which the souls of the dead are conducted)". Similarly, Bickel (1997: 69f) reports a case from Belhare where something on the flat ground inside a room is said to be 'uphill' only because it is located towards that side of the house from which a path leads uphill after many detours down and across.

Use of geomorphic expressions is thus to a large degree determined by real or imagined trajectories defining up and down directions. In the Himalayas, this extends to the cardinal directions of 'north' and 'south' which are largely defined by experienceable trajectories: 'north' is on a trajectory leading to the cold snow peaks further 'up' and 'south' is on the way towards the hot Gangetic plains further 'down'. Rather than abstract vectors on a horizontal plane, cardinal directions are associated with areas that are geographically more or less well-defined. Similarly, 'east' and 'west' are fixed by the daily path of the sun which does not vary greatly at this latitude (and in many Kiranti languages 'east' and 'west' are indeed designated by terms for sunrise and sunset; cf. Bickel 1997: 65 and Ebert, this volume).

Even more important, however, is the observation that the trajectories underlying geomorphic orientation are often crucially dependent, as in Allen's example, on socio-cultural meanings inscribed into landscape, on the practical experience of common travel routes or ritual trajectories and even on specific space constructions in individual narratives and biographical details (also cf. Haviland 1993, Widlok 1997). In the Himalayan societies studied in the present volume, such a cognitive structuring of landscape is based on the numerous religious and social ideas associated with landscape as much as in the reiterations of ritual journeys: as empha-

sized in Section 1 above and many chapters of this volume, north and south are not just topographical areas, they are also religious places, locations of different gods and mythological meanings. In line with this, use of geomorphic terms of orientation is often most dominant in mythological contexts, as Ebert points out in her contribution.

From a cognitive point of view, one important effect of such cultural valuations of landscape is an increased awareness of various places and paths, it helps indeed form a fairly explicit indigenous geography, and especially the recitation of imagined journeys in shamanist séances and other ritual practices often shows remarkable cartographic faithfulness even beyond the immediate area of the people (cf. especially Gaenszle's, Oppitz', Höfer's, and Pettigrew's contributions). By recalling people's embeddedness in their topographical environment, these cultural (re)constructions of landscape constitute a firm grounding of life in a geomorphic, i. e., landscape-based, apprehension of space in every-day speech and cognition. There are many ways, however, in which such a conceptualisation can actually be structured.

2.2 Themes and variations in Himalayan space

In Himalayan societies, two dominant ideas of cultural landscape constructions are detectable, often forming the kind of complex mixture that is characteristic of Himalayan ethnographies in many other respects, too: one type of space construction, which is generally found in the Nepalese hill area, basically orders landscape in a 'geomorphic' way, i. e., in terms of cardinal directions and hill or mountain inclinations. The other construction type largely derives from general Indic patterns and brings in body-based notions, which are linked up again, though, with the environment, in particular with cardinal directions.

The 'hill' conception is most transparent in Kiranti societies, where reference is hardly ever made to body-defined features. Spatialization of rituals, architecture and mythology as much as spatial language relies almost exclusively on notions of 'up(hill)', 'down(hill)' and 'over/across/traverse'. These notions are basically used for directions on the local hill or the over-all inclination of the Himalayan range and are sometimes extended to the vertical zenith-nadir axis (see the contributions by Bickel, Ebert and Gaenszle). To be sure, the notions are occasionally projected onto the body, too, as when the head of a pig assumes a particular ritual value (Allen 1972). Notions like 'left' and 'right' or 'front' and 'back', however, which are

defined exclusively by the body, are rarely employed (cf. Ebert's and Bickel's contributions). If they do occur, the patterns are often reminiscent of common Nepalese themes, sometimes suggesting borrowing. In some cases, a connection to body-defined space comes up, tellingly, only when an indigenous concept is translated into Nepali. In native vocabulary, the ritual practice of raising one's soul, common among Kiranti groups (Allen 1972, Sagant 1981, Hardman, n. d., etc.), relies on a general upward trajectory, which is unrelated to the human body. When translating into Nepali, however, people frequently bring in the notion of *sir*, i. e., the head as the upmost part of the body (Gaenszle 1996 and this volume, on the Mewahang).

This translation offers a bridge to the 'Indic' tradition, which starts out from a fundamental identification of body-based notions with geomorphic notions, i. e., on a conflation of two basic types distinguished in cognitive science typologies of space (cf. above). This conflation is in part established by the ancient Indo-European pattern of using the same words for 'left/right/front/back' and for cardinal directions, as illustrated by Sanskrit *uttara* 'north, left, up', *dakṣiṇa* 'south, right', *pūrva* 'east, in front, before', and *paśca* 'behind, later, western' (see Hertz 1909, C. Brown 1983, Gaborieau 1992, Bickel 1994). In the non-linguistic domain, the same conflation is perhaps best illustrated by the *maṇḍala* as a unification of body and cosmos, systematically establishing links between body parts and cardinal directions (cf. Tucci 1949, Slusser 1982, Gaborieau 1992, Macdonald 1997, among others). It is equally enshrined in the concept of the *vāstu puruṣa*, the primordial man lying face down at the foundation of a Hindu temple: the head points east, the feet west, the right is in the south, the left in the north (Kramrisch 1946).

Among the societies studied in the present volume, the Indic construction of space is most clearly expounded by Newar culture as discussed by Toffin. It is clearly transparent in terms of the highly emphasized 'inside-outside' opposition that basically derives from a mandalaic space conception in equating the body's boundary with a *maṇḍala* circle. This contrasts strikingly with the 'hill' space conception, where the 'inside-outside' opposition is far less valued and hardly lexicalized (Ebert, this volume). In Newar culture, the Indic conception is manifest, too, in the frequent allusions to 'left/right' and 'front/back' in the formulation of various do's and don't's. It is interesting to note, however, that Newar people, just as in so many other aspects of their identity, by no means limit themselves to Indic conceptions. Time and again there are traces of purely geomorphic 'hill' concepts, too. A particularly telling example is what Toffin reports about the ancient Newar

names of Kathmandu and Patan, *Yem* and *Yela*, respectively, which are likely to derive from cardinal direction names — without a connection to body part notions.

Just as Newar culture is not limited to Indic conceptions, so are the 'hill' societies studied here not exclusive of such conceptions. As shown by Oppitz' contributions, there are 'tribal' versions of concentric, *maṇḍala*-like space conceptions. In these cases, however, the concept is transformed and, rather than relying on body-centred notions, is based on territorial notions (e. g. sacred mountains) that are largely absent in the traditional Indic conception. Thus, the two strands of spatial conception detected here are by no means mutually exclusive. As Oppitz points out in the beginning of his chapter, a society can employ several varieties of space construction simultaneously and load them with different cultural valuations.

The differences between the two varieties of space constructions discussed here notwithstanding, there are common themes as well. In both varieties, strong emphasis is given to linking microcosmos and macrocosmos, bringing together the lived-in world and the pantheon or the present political situation and the mythical past of the ancestors (see especially Gaenszle's, Oppitz' and Pettigrew's contributions). As pointed out in Section 1.1 above, this frequently extends to forming homologies between body and environment. However, in this case there appears to be a systematic difference between Indic and hill conceptions: whereas under the Indic conception the links between body and environment are foundational, in the 'hill' conception, the terms employed are defined basically by the environment and are projected only secondarily onto the body: 'up' and 'down' are not body part terms, but only include, among their many uses (cf. Levinson and Brown 1994, Bickel 1994 and this volume) an application onto head and feet which are 'up' and 'down' in a canonical upright position.

3. Structure of the volume

The interrelationship between everyday forms and ritual forms of acting and thinking is an issue which comes up in all the papers assembled in this volume. Whether ritual action is in the foreground, appearing as an epitomization of backgrounded everyday concepts, or whether ordinary action is in the foreground, founded and supported by an ideal type model in the background, in both cases the actual practices situated in a particular context can only be comprehended properly within a cultural 'horizon' of understanding, a transcendent conceptual order which pro-

vides structure and meaning. Thus there is a subtle dialectic between ritual and the mundane as both can become thematic as well as presupposed.

The contribution by **Gérard Toffin** describes how the dichotomy of an 'inside' as opposed to an 'outside' in Newar culture reappears in various forms and on various levels. The concept of a bounded space, which has a clearly demarcated and particularly valued interior in distinction to a differently valued exterior, is equally applied to the house, sacred buildings, or the whole settlement. As becomes evident in the case of temples and cities, the underlying pattern is that of the *maṇḍala*, the cosmic diagram, which is ultimately of Indian origin (cf. Section 2.2 above). It has often been pointed out that this pattern projects a sacred centre, but Toffin here draws attention to another important aspect: the fact that it defines a clear-cut and highly meaningful boundary, which suits the tendency toward closure and introversion that is so typical of Newar culture. The pervasive distinction between 'inside' and 'outside', which is also reflected in language, is implicit in ordinary action: whether he or she is closing the front door, enters a temple precinct, or leaves the town, a Newar always moves in a symbolic space defined by architectural constructs. But most of all, as Toffin shows in detail, the distinction comes out in ritual, where the implicit contrast between 'inside' and 'outside' is made explicit. Interestingly, it is in particular the passage between the two, their dynamic interrelationship, which is given symbolic expression. Thus ritual appears as a mediation of the conceptual oppositions which are fundamental for everyday practice.

The following contribution by **Balthasar Bickel**, which is based on research among the Belhare, focuses on the cognitive foundations of spatial orientation in both ritual as well as ordinary practice. In the main section of his contribution, Bickel deals with what he calls the cultural formalism, i. e. the culturally regimented patterns and practices which make up 'the Belhare way'. This includes standardized behaviour, such as the proper way of weaving a straw mat or performing ancestral worship, as well as cultural 'inscriptions', such as the architectural layout of the house or the location of sacred sites. Bickel analyses the spatial operations underlying such formalism by distinguishing different 'anchors', i. e. experiential bases which serve as reference for spatial orientation: the environment (hence: ecomorphic space), the physical landscape (geomorphic space), a socially important region (aristomorphic space) and the body (physiomorphic space). It becomes clear that the single most important spatial concept for the Belhare is the 'up/down' opposition, which recurs with all the different anchors, but is particularly prominent in ecomorphic and geomorphic space. Bickel then goes on to show that most of these spatial operations, with a similar emphasis on the up/down axis, are

found in language, too. This leads the author to conclude that there is a common cognitive and experiential background on which linguistic and non-linguistic practice draws. Whether one pursues formalized activities, moves around in the house and the village, or uses ordinary language, it is always important in this society to keep up a special awareness of the 'up' and 'down' of landscape.

The linguistic aspects of the 'up/down' dimension in Kiranti languages are looked at more closely in **Karen Ebert's** contribution, which focusses on Rai mythological texts. Comparing Thulung, Bantawa and Camling data, Ebert demonstrates the deep grammaticalization of this orientational pattern. As it is above all linked to the landscape (i. e., used in a geomorphic way) and only occasionally anchored in the gravitational axis she avoids speaking of the vertical dimension and introduces the term 'altitudinal' (case, root, adverb, etc.). Similarly as Bickel in reference to Belhare, Ebert comes to the conclusion that in these Rai languages other spatial dimensions, like cardinal directions, right/left, or inside/outside, are only marginally marked. Not all Kiranti languages have equally preserved the system of 'up/down' markers, and there seems to be a general tendency of erosion. The Camling Rai, interestingly, only use it in the telling of their myths, which may be taken as an indication that the mythology reflects an 'older' usage. In the second part of her paper Ebert discusses the 'up/down' dimension in the mythology and shows that in most mythological episodes this conceptual opposition is of fundamental importance. Thus the author observes a close interrelationship between Rai mythology and altitudinal case markers, pointing out that Kiranti groups at the eastern and western periphery, like Limbu and Hayu, neither share the Rai mythological legacy nor have a fully elaborated altitudinal case system. This leads her to speculate that mythic language usage may have drained into the everyday language. In any case it becomes clear that "the presence of mythological concepts in everyday life cannot be overestimated" (Ebert, this volume).

This observation is corroborated and further illustrated in the subsequent contribution by **Martin Gaenszle**. Like the three remaining papers it deals with the phenomenon of ritual journeys, i. e., the imaginary travelling through the landscape with the help of ritual texts. Comparing different types of journeys among the Mewahang Rai, Gaenszle shows that these can only be properly understood against the background of mythology. A journey down towards the plains evokes the mythic place of origin in the Tarai, where the variety of species and certain ancestral spirits came into being. Thus the 'down' location is associated with the creation and fertility, but at the same time also with dangerous beings and the origin of death. A tribal priest travels down there mainly to dispose of something.

Conversely, travelling up toward the river source is associated with encountering the divine forces at their distant and pure abodes in order to do divination and eventually retrieve the lost souls. It is from the upper river source that the first being, the snake deity, ultimately caused Creation. But clearly the positive valuation of 'uphill' (or 'upstream') equally applies to the upper location in the vertical dimension, as one journey leads to an ancestral deity in the sky. As Gaenszle demonstrates, the upward and downward journeys, whether along the river or along the vertical axis, are textually construed in the ritual language by making full use of the grammaticalized up/down/across scheme. One might say that the landscape frame and the gravitational frame, i. e., geomorphic and ecomorphic space, respectively, which have been found in cultural and linguistic practices, find explicit expression in metaphorical form. The cultural symbolism here appears thus as an elaborate visualization of implicit categories.

At first sight the Magar ritual journeys and the respective mythical chants described by **Michael Oppitz** appear to be quite different. Whereas among the Rai cardinal directions are not of great significance (among the Mewahang they are never mentioned in the texts), in the Magar search journeys they are given particular emphasis in language and symbolism. In one type of chant the shaman moves through all the four compass points, one after the other in a circular manner. Oppitz shows that the cardinal directions are consistently correlated with specific supernatural beings and values and suggests regarding this as a kind of tribal *maṇḍala*-isation. And indeed, much of this is reminiscent of similar, albeit more materialized, orientational patterns which are found among the Newar (see above), and which have developed in a most elaborate form in India (Gaborieau 1992). This raises questions concerning the historical background of these notions. On the other hand, a closer look at the different types of journeys reveals that there are also many similarities with the Rai case. Here too the 'up/down' axis is given particular emphasis. The north, which is essentially the highland, mountain area, is associated with the first shaman's homeland, with prosperity and health; it is here where all the linear search journeys end. They begin in the south, down in the lowland plains, and this cardinal direction is associated with witches and the netherworld, with disease and disaster. Clearly, as among the Rai, it is the movement uphill, to the north, which is most auspicious, and in certain contexts this is also equated with an upward movement in the direct vertical line. As Oppitz further points out, the directional oppositions are also present in the concepts of ordinary space, in the division of the house, of the village, of kinship groups. So again, the

cosmic space projected in myth and ritual can be seen as a 'blow-up' of the everyday spatial order, forming its background and horizon.

The typological variety of ritual journeys within a particular tradition is also made a central topic in the contribution by **András Höfer**. Looking at five different cases of ritual place name enumerations among the Western Tamang, Höfer observes that, though they are of varying complexity, they all are basically ritual techniques for the reduction of distance between the physical and the metaphysical, or the humans and the superhumans. Whether the itinerary takes the form of a zigzag line or a spiral, or whether the progression is 'afferent' or 'efferent', the verbal journeys can be seen as 'amplificatory linguistic devices' which reduce, or bridge, the distance by 'pacing it out' step by step. This eventually leads to a conflation of the divine abode and the altar construction, i. e., a 'double presence' which enables the practitioner to encounter the deities. Though it is not possible to account for all the details of the specific itineraries, the overall pattern is quite clear and resembles those brought out by Ebert, Gaenszle and Oppitz: the north, uphill, is the location of the 'country of the gods' and the mythic place of Tamang ethnogenesis, whereas the southern direction, down towards the plains, is associated with 'death', 'evil', and 'impurity' — it is the direction towards which dangerous goddesses are escorted in order to get rid of them. The east-west axis, by contrast, appears to be of little importance. Again, what is crucial is that the journeys take place not in an abstract space but in the concrete geographical landscape, passing through places which are filled with cultural memories. Höfer stresses the historical background of the mythic landscape. One of the journeys' destinations, for example, was once a political centre and possibly was the centre of a regional cult. By naming the place names (*nomen*) the performer partakes of the inherent power of these sites (*numen*). Thus the practice of ritual journeys maps out a landscape in which the Tamang have inscribed their view of the past and which forms a horizon for their self-identity up to the present.

That this aspect of identity constitution through the practice of ritual journeys is still highly important even in today's changing political context is brought out in **Judith Pettigrew's** contribution on the Tamu-mai ('Gurung') in west-central Nepal. Since the introduction of multi-party democracy after a popular movement in 1990, various ethnic organisations have come into existence which strive to preserve and revitalize the indigenous cultural traditions which are seen as threatened by the dominance of Hinduism and Buddhism. The Tamu Religious and Cultural Organisation studied by Pettigrew initiated a re-examination of Tamu history in order to achieve a more adequate view of the past, correct previous misrepresenta-

tions and redefine the Tamus' ethnic identity. In the course of this re-evaluation shamanic traditions, which are threatened by decline, have been rediscovered as a source of ancient knowledge and this has led to a new valuation of the shamans' ritual journey. What is unique about this case is that members of the religious and cultural organisation initiated a series of pilgrimage-like journeys along the itinerary of the shamanic chants, and Pettigrew, who has accompanied the group, vividly describes how this experience gave new meaning to the ancestral tradition and reshaped the participants' sense of time and space. Like the Tamang the Tamu-mai say that their ancestors came from the north, from an area somewhere in 'Mongolia'. By walking along the ancestral routes of migration they reclaim and re-map the landscape, authenticating their version of history. It becomes clear that the practice of religious journeying, ephemeral as it may at first seem, has a strong impact on ordinary self-perception and can be profoundly political. Whether these journeys are imaginary or real appears to be of secondary importance, in both cases they project the spatio-temporal horizon of a 'close-up far-off world.'

4. Conclusion

To conclude, we may say that though cultural representations of space in the central Himalayas are highly varied there are a number of recurrent patterns. Some of them, like the body-focussed sacred *maṇḍala*, appear to be of Indian origin, others, like the 'uphill/downhill' opposition and the strong attachment to the landscape, are more typical of the Tibeto-Burman heritage; yet others, like the homologisation of micro- and macro-cosmos, especially body, house, settlement and region, are probably found in a rather wide-spread distribution. The cases of spatial orientation documented in the contributions to this volume all seem to be characterized by a high degree of internal coherence. Obviously these ethnic groups have developed their own distinctive cultural style. Nevertheless, in analytic terms it is clear that these conceptual orders are not governed by a single overall principle, but rather must be seen as constituted by various, often incongruent ideas, which, at least in part, testify to historical changes. What is common to all these cases, however, is that the fundamental ideas which are at the base of spatial orientation come out most poignantly in the religious and ritual traditions which form an important background of ordinary social life and practice. Whether these cultural traditions simply appear as vestiges of a more 'complete' order of the past (as, for example, in the Camling case reported by Ebert), or whether they are consciously used as

sources for a redefinition of the present (as testified in particular by Pettigrew), in any case they provide a horizon of understanding for ordinary forms of speaking and acting, and are intrinsically linked with these in a mutual relationship.

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